



# HISPANICS in the UNITED STATES NAVY

*The opportunities afforded by the U.S. Navy to the diverse people of our country  
are not duplicated anywhere else on the planet.* —REAR ADMIRAL ALBERT GARCIA III, 2010

AMERICA'S  
**NAVY**

A GLOBAL FORCE FOR GOOD™



*Hispanic Americans have served in the Navy throughout our nation's history. They have been seamen, 4-star admirals, boatswain's mates, corpsmen, fighter pilots, physicians, nuclear engineers, and policymakers.*



Hispanic Americans have stood not on the fringes of the service, but at its center, as makers of U.S. naval history. Among the first American naval heroes of Hispanic descent was Jorge Anthony Magin Farragut, born on Minorca, a Mediterranean island

◀ *Opposite page:* Seaman Miguel A. Vega waits pierside to assist the guided missile frigate USS *Crommelin* (FFG 37) docking at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, after a cruise in the Pacific Ocean, April 2007.

*Left:* Aboard USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN 70), Ship's Surgeon Lt. Cmdr. Kathryn L. Berndt, right, prepares for surgery a 12-year-old girl injured in the earthquake that struck Haiti in January 2010. Dr. Berndt called in Dr. Sanjay Gupta, center, CNN medical correspondent and practicing neurosurgeon, to consult in the unusual case. On the left is Navy anesthesiologist Cmdr. Jerry Berman. The aircraft carrier and its air wing personnel provided humanitarian and disaster relief to earthquake victims under Operation Unified Response.





▲ Left: Sailing Master Jorge Farragut, c. 1800.

Center: Medal of Honor awarded to Seaman John Ortega, a U.S. Sailor born in Spain in 1840, for gallantry during the Civil War.

Right: Rear Adm. David Farragut's ships enter Mobile Bay, 5 August 1864.

under Spanish rule. He fought in the South Carolina Navy during the Revolutionary War and served in the U.S. Navy during the War of 1812. Jorge Farragut's son, David Glasgow Farragut, was America's greatest naval officer of the 19th century and the Navy's first full admiral.

Best known for his daring maneuvers at Mobile Bay in August 1864, David Farragut was forced to make a crucial decision. Lashed in the rigging of the flagship *Hartford*'s mainmast high above the deck, Farragut had a

bird's-eye view as his fleet fought past the booming guns of Fort Morgan at the bay's entrance. When the skipper of *Brooklyn*, the lead ship in the column just ahead of *Hartford*, reported a line of torpedoes (as mines were called then) across the channel, the column of ships began bunching up under the enemy guns. To maneuver around the torpedoes would expose the ships to the cannonade. To go forward would mean entering a minefield. To retreat was out of the question. "Damn the



## DAVID G. FARRAGUT

Born on 5 July 1801 in eastern Tennessee, David Farragut spent his early youth living in the American frontier and speaking both English and Spanish. He entered the Navy in 1810 and spent much of the next half century at sea. During the Civil War he became a rear admiral when he was appointed to command a naval squadron in January 1862. By the end of 1864, he had captured New Orleans, then the South's biggest city; participated in operations to seize control of the Mississippi River; enforced the blockade in the Gulf of Mexico; and won the battle of Mobile Bay, his most famous victory. To reward him for his achievements, Congress and the President in 1866 made him the country's first full admiral—equivalent to a four-star admiral today.

*“Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!”*

◀ David G. Farragut, America's first admiral, c. 1864.

torpedoes!” Farragut shouted. “Full speed ahead!” *Hartford* led the rest of the ships into Mobile Bay, and Farragut won a storied victory in American naval history. The Navy recognized his notable service by naming a modern-day ship after him, the guided missile destroyer USS *Farragut* (DDG 99), commissioned in June 2006.

During World War II an estimated quarter-million to a half-million Hispanic Americans served in the U.S. Armed Forces, making up about 2.5 to 5 percent of the total force. Many distinguished themselves in the Navy during the war. Submariner Marion Frederic Ramirez de Arellano, a U.S. Naval Academy graduate from Puerto

Rico, helped sink enemy ships while serving on three different submarines. He became the first Hispanic submarine skipper when he took command of USS *Balao* (SS 285) on 18 April 1944. For his actions against the Imperial Japanese Navy during World War II, he received two Silver Stars, the Legion of Merit, and the Bronze Star.

Hispanic American naval officers and enlisted men and women continued to serve with honor in the Korean and Vietnam wars as well as throughout the Cold War when the Navy defended sea lanes against a potential Soviet threat. During the 1970s the Navy developed an affirmative action plan that for the first time set



◀ *Bottom left:* Cmdr. (later Capt.) Ramirez de Arellano, right, receives the Silver Star—the fourth highest U.S. military decoration. In 1944 he was the first Hispanic commanding officer of a submarine, USS *Balao* (SS 285), top. Later in the war he commanded a submarine division.

*Right:* Navy ace Eugene A. Valencia Jr. (see sidebar) flew an F6F Hellcat, like the one shown here, in World War II.



## EUGENE A. VALENCIA JR.

San Francisco native Eugene A. Valencia Jr. shot down 23 enemy aircraft in the Pacific during World War II, led the most successful fighter plane division in American naval history, and remains the Navy's third-ranking ace of all time. Appointed Aviation Cadet on 1 August 1941, Valencia got his baptism of fire flying a U.S. Navy Hellcat in October 1943 during strikes against Japanese forces on Wake Island and at Tarawa Atoll. After several dogfights with the enemy aircraft, he spotted a weakness in their gunnery. Returning stateside for training, he developed a tactic nicknamed the "mowing machine" to exploit this weakness. When Fighter Squadron 9 redeployed to the Pacific in 1945, Valencia and his four-plane division tallied 43 of the squadron's 130 victories. That year he received the Navy Cross for his outstanding service.

*"I love [the Hellcat] so much, that if [I could], I'd marry it."*

◀ Lt. Eugene Valencia Jr., c. 1944.





recruiting goals for people of “Spanish heritage.” In 1979 Edward Hidalgo became the first Hispanic Secretary of the Navy and made recruiting more Latinos and Latinas, especially as officers, a top priority. At first, the Navy set the recruiting goal for Hispanic officers at a figure reflecting the proportion of Latinos and Latinas with college degrees. In July 1994 the Secretary of the Navy launched an initiative seeking to achieve a naval officer corps that reflected the proportion of Hispanic people in the United States. This has been the Navy’s goal ever since. As of June 2010, 6.2 percent of officers and 17.2 percent of enlisted men and women in the Navy were of Hispanic ethnicity.



◀ *Top:* U.S. Naval Academy graduate Marine 1st Lt. Baldomero Lopez, shown leading his platoon over the seawall at Inchon, Korea, in September 1950, received the Medal of Honor posthumously for his heroic actions there.

*Left:* Edward Hidalgo, the first Hispanic Secretary of the Navy, served from 1979 to 1981 during the Carter administration.

*Right:* Lt. Al Cisneros was the first Latino pilot to serve with the Blue Angels, the Navy’s flight demonstration squadron.





## HORACIO RIVERO JR.

Horacio Rivero Jr. was known for his keen intellect, leadership, and contributions in developing nuclear weapons. Born in Puerto Rico, Rivero graduated third among the 441 members of the U.S. Naval Academy class of 1931. Recognizing his intellect, the Navy sent Rivero to graduate school, first to the Naval Postgraduate School and then to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he earned a master of science degree in electrical engineering. Rivero spent most of World War II on board cruisers, serving in many of the most significant battles in the Pacific.

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*“[Naval War College provided me] the opportunity to meet and make friends with a lot of people from the Army, the Air Force, State Department, CIA, Treasury, and so forth. . . . And we had the cream of the Navy going into it.”*

◀ Adm. Horacio Rivero Jr., Vice Chief of Naval Operations and the first Latino full admiral of the 20th century, takes a ride on a Swift boat off Cam Ranh Bay, South Vietnam, July 1966.

Witness the success of a handful of many firsts for Hispanics.

- The first four Latinas graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1981: Lilia Ramirez of Bayshore, New York; Carmel Gilliland of Albuquerque, New Mexico; Trinora Pinto of Louisville, Kentucky; and Ina Gomez of Grand Junction, Colorado.
- Before retiring from the Navy in 1996, Rear Admiral Marc Y. E. Pelaez, Chief of Naval Research, managed the Navy and Marine Corps' science and technology programs. With an annual budget of \$1.5 billion, his command



◀ Rear Adm. Marc Y. E. Pelaez, Chief of Naval Research from 1993 to 1996.

As a pioneer in nuclear weapons development after the war, Rivero became a charter member in the Navy Department's Atomic Operations Division. This assignment put him on the cutting edge of the era's highest technology. In 1946 he participated in Operation Crossroads, the atomic bomb tests on Bikini Atoll in the Pacific, and two years later he participated in similar tests in Eniwetok. In March 1949 he became one of the original members of the Weapons Systems Evaluation Group, Office of the Secretary of Defense. On 3 October 1955 the Navy promoted him to rear admiral and assigned him duty working on hydrogen bombs.

During the 1950s and 1960s Rivero began his climb to the Navy's top echelons, serving in a variety of staff and command positions. Highlights include a tour with the Atlantic Fleet staff and a stint as Director of Navy Program Planning in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, where he laid the groundwork for the building of the *Nimitz*-class aircraft carriers. Promoted to full admiral in 1964, he served as Vice Chief of Naval Operations and later became Commander in Chief of Allied Forces, Southern Europe. Had the Cold War turned hot and war broken out, Admiral Rivero would have commanded a million service men and women from five countries. Rivero remained in command of NATO's Southern Forces until his retirement on 1 June 1972 after 41 years of service.



## KATHRYN BERNDT

Raised in Texas, Kathryn Berndt graduated from Harvard University with a degree in psychology. But what she really wanted to do was to practice medicine. She concluded that a Navy scholarship program would provide the most economical route to her goal. After earning her M.D. at Tufts University, she was promoted to lieutenant and entered active duty service. Dr. Berndt has since served as Medical Department head on the amphibious ship USS *Ogden* (LPD 5) and completed her general surgery residency at Naval Medical Center San Diego. “The Navy has given me the opportunity to excel in ways in which I had only dreamed about,” she said. “To become a doctor, to become a surgeon, and to have a wonderful family.” Dr. Berndt, now a lieutenant commander, serves as the ship’s surgeon on board the carrier USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN 76) and was also the surgeon on USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN 70) when the ship responded to the earthquake in Haiti in January 2010.

*“The Navy has given me the opportunity to excel in ways in which I had only dreamed about.”*

◀ Dr. Kathryn Berndt on board USS *Carl Vinson* off the coast of Haiti in January 2010.



included the Office of Naval Research, the Naval Research Laboratory, and foreign field offices in London and Tokyo.

- In 1997 Marine Lieutenant Colonel Carlos I. Noriega logged 221 hours in space during NASA's sixth space shuttle mission to dock with the Russian Space Station *Mir*.
- In 2001 President George W. Bush appointed William A. Navas as Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. A native of Puerto Rico and a decorated combat veteran of the Vietnam War, Navas also held the rank of Major General in the Army and the position of Director of the Army National Guard.
- In 2003 the Puerto Rico Medical Society named Navy surgeon Commander Miguel A. Cubano Physician of the Year.

◀ *Clockwise from top left:* Marine Lt. Col. Carlos I. Noriega, a mission specialist on Space Shuttle *Atlantis* mission STS-84, suits up during final prelaunch preparations at Kennedy Space Center, Fla., 1997; Cmdrs. Miguel A. Cubano and Eliseo E. Bautista, Navy surgeons, operate on a patient at Naval Hospital Jacksonville, Fla., September 2003; Capt. Kathlene Contres, with Representative Grace Napolitano (D-CA), receives a leadership award from *LATINA Style* magazine, September 2005; Secretary of the Navy Gordon R. England presents the Navy Cross to Hospitalman Apprentice Luis E. Fonseca Jr., who saved the lives of several wounded Marines during the 2003 battle of An Nasiriyah, Iraq.





◀ *Left to right: Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Joe R. Campa Jr. speaks with Sailors at Bagram Air Force Base, Afghanistan, 2008; the guided missile frigate USS Curts (FFG 38) deployed to the North Arabian Sea in 2008 under commanding officer Yvette Davids, the first Latina to command a warship; Cmdr. Davids, as the military executive assistant to the executive director of Naval Surface Forces, presents a certificate of commendation to Cadet Seaman Emmarow Taledo, an honors freshman in the Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps at Junipero Serra High School in San Diego, Calif., April 2009.*

- As a result of extraordinary heroism while serving with the Marines during the battle of An Nasiriyah, Iraq, in March 2003, Hospitalman Apprentice Luis E. Fonseca Jr. received the Navy Cross, the highest medal the Department of the Navy can award and the second highest medal for valor after the Medal of Honor.
- Captain Kathlene Contres was the Navy's highest ranking female Hispanic active duty line officer when she became Commandant of the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute in March 2005. Educating more than 1,200 students per

year, the Institute is the Defense Department's center of excellence for equal opportunity, equal employment opportunity, and human relations education, training, and research.

- In July 2006 Joe R. Campa Jr. became the first Hispanic Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, the service's top-ranking enlisted person.
- U.S. Naval Academy graduate Commander Yvette Davids, the first Latina commanding officer of a surface combatant ship, assumed command of the guided missile frigate USS Curts (FFG 38) in 2007.

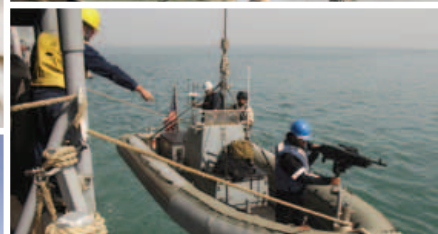


These few examples represent a fraction of Hispanic success stories in America's Navy. Hispanic Americans have served in nearly every position the service has to offer, whether at sea, under the sea, in the air, on land, or in space. In the foreseeable future there will be no more "firsts," for the day will come when a Latino or Latina will have served in every Navy billet.

In the 21st century the Navy's leadership remains strongly committed to diversity. Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Gary Roughead declared that the Navy "must embrace the demographic changes of tomorrow, and build a Navy that always reflects our country's makeup."

A person who is motivated and hardworking, and has the honor, courage, and commitment to serve, can achieve his or her dreams, regardless of race, creed, color, or ethnic origin.

◀ *Clockwise from top left: Seabee Rosa Medina prepares for a field training exercise at Camp Hansen in Okinawa, Japan, April 2007; Chief Warrant Officer Armando Garcia and his son, Corporal Armando Garcia, on the flight deck of USS Denver (LPD 9) are both deployed with the Marines in the western Pacific, July 2002; Yeoman 2nd Class Adrianna Mueller helps prepare Lt.j.g. Leticia Soto for the Seabee Combat Warfare Specialist test, April 2004; Aviation Maintenance Administrationman 2nd Class Jesus Lopez signals an OK to supervisors during diving proficiency training, February 2005; Lt. Alejandro Hernandez signals for an F/A-18C Hornet to launch from the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) steaming in the Red Sea, May 2007; Aviation Electronics Technician Airman William Vasquez removes an instrument landing system receiver from an F/A-18F Super Hornet aboard the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) in the Gulf of Oman, January 2009.*



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Clockwise from top left: Rear Adm. Albert Garcia III, the deputy commander of the First Naval Construction Division, talks to Ana Mejia of Azteca America TV during a Cinco de Mayo festival in Denver, Colo., May 2008; U.S. Navy Hospitalman Garret Castro interviews a patient at a field hospital in Shinkiani, Pakistan, during humanitarian assistance to victims of an earthquake that devastated the region on 8 October 2005; Seabee Eduardo Riveragonzalez fires a machine gun down range during weapons qualifications in central Iraq, April 2004; Damage Controlman 3rd Class Matthew Villafuerte, member of a visit, board, search and seizure team, secures a machine gun to its mount on a rigid-hull inflatable boat being lowered from the guided missile frigate USS *Ingraham* (FFG 61) into the Arabian Gulf, February 2008; Command Master Chief Michael R. Ruiz serves in Iraq with the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, December 2008; Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 3rd Class Gerson Gonzalez signals to an MH-60 helicopter during a vertical replenishment aboard the amphibious transport dock USS *Cleveland* (LPD 7) in the Arabian Gulf, February 2008.

*Photo credits: LATINA Style, Naval History & Heritage Command, NAVY.mil.*

*Front cover: Quartermaster 2nd Class Carolina Castanon makes her rounds in Naval Support Activity Bahrain's Harbor Patrol Unit, September 2003. Castanon helped maintain round-the-clock watches protecting the personnel stationed in Bahrain.*

Navy Diversity Directorate (N134)  
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